Nochleg

Russia as It Looks to the Village Youth

By Maurice G. Hindus

The boys asked me if I would go on *nochleg* with them. They would provide a horse for me and a sheepskin coat. Only—would I sleep on the bare ground? If not—well, they'd be glad to fetch along a sack of straw, and my *bourzhui* American bones would have something soft and dry to rest upon.

What is *nochleg?*

Our peasants are land-poor and have not enough hay to feed their horses in the barn on summer nights; so they take them out to pasture. Evenings when chores are finished and supper eaten a boy or a girl from every household—usually an unmarried person—goes with the horse to a designated place in the village, where the other boys and girls assemble, and from there ride together on horseback to the communal pasture about three or four versts away. Staying out all night with the horses in the open is called *nochleg.*

During my sojourn in America my mind often wandered back to my boyhood days in the old village, and more than once have I lived over in imagination the joy and excitement of going on *nochleg.* To the young it is a glorious adventure. All ride to pasture together singing, there break up into parties, go after wood, build a bonfire, sit round, tell ghost stories—such harrowing ones—sing, dance, play games, run races, make love, hunt after wolves.

Of course I'd go on *nochleg,* I told the boys, and no need of fetching along a sack of straw. They laughed and warned me that it was August already, nights were damp, chilly, the pasture as hard as oak. But then—perhaps I should not have much of a chance to sleep anyway. They had many things to tell me and might keep me awake all night. Some of them had been present at the discussion of the older people during the day. *Nu,* the old people! They were hopeless. Under the czar they were flayed and bled and never mumbled a word. And now they shrieked the world was coming to an end. When the Poles were in the village and robbed and pillaged and whipped them they prayed day and night for the return of the Reds. And now—*ekh*—they wanted everything at once. Perhaps it was because they were smelling the approach of death. But the young people were different. They had their lives ahead of them. They could bide time. Some of them had been in the Red army, had read a few books, had listened to lectures, had seen something of the world outside of their slimy village. They had ideas of

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their own. At *nochleg* we'd have the night to ourselves in the open pasture with no old people to disturb us, and we could talk about it at length. I must not carry away to America the impression that the young people were as dark-minded as their elders.

The news of my going on *nochleg* spread rapidly in the village, and not a peasant I met but had a crisp remark to make about it. At the house where I was staying several neighbors had gathered, men and women, to see me start off. A boy brought me a huge sheepskin coat with an immense collar, and when I crawled into it the onlookers burst into a merry laugh.

"Quite a respectable-looking muzhik," jested one of them.

"All he needs now is a pair of *lapti*," remarked another.

"And a cross," added an old woman.

"Leave the cross alone, *baba* [old woman]; people are no longer afraid of the devil."

"I should say not," she shot back angrily; "they are themselves rapidly turning devil."

A little barefoot fellow rushed in panting and announced that he had a horse for me outside and that my party had sent word they were waiting for me up the village. The party consisted of about a dozen youths between seventeen and twenty-two, most of whom had seen service in the Red army. They were the "intellectuals" of the village. When I joined them they proposed that we start off at once and the rest of the crowd would catch up with us.

It was a glorious night. The moon hung low over the earth, full and brilliant; not a cloud in the star-drenched skies; not a breeze stirring; the air damp, chilly, biting gently and pleasantly at the cheeks; hardly a light in any of the houses—peasants in bed already, or sitting in the dark—could afford no kerosene; dogs barked continually, now singly, now in a chorus, short snappy yelps, as dogs do when they are content with the world. From the other end of the village there rose a song, girls' voices, low, long drawn out, growing louder and more distinct as the singers were drawing nearer and nearer. We rode along slowly on the bare backs of our horses, who stepped now and then with a splash into a water-filled hollow, of which there were many on the way. An army of little fellows hastened to catch up with us, crowded close, and leaned forward as though bent upon catching every word of our conversation.

Interesting bits of information the boys imparted to me. None of them any longer believed in ghosts or spirits of any kind, not even in *rusalkas* (water-nymphs), they assured me. It seemed hardly credible in the light of my own boyhood experience. How we did dread the *rusalka*, who was supposed to be hunting always for little fellows to take back with her to the bottom of the river where she lived! And there were so many of them at large in summer; and our fathers and mothers saw them, and said so; and we too caught glimpses of them, so we told each other, sitting on fences with hair loosened on shoulders and with fiery eyes seeking to entice the passer-by . . . It is all nonsense, the boys said, and laughed heartily. There were no *rusalkas* and no *domovoys* (house-goblins) and no other kinds of spirits. All such beliefs came from the priests who served the czar and kept the muzhiks in ignorance so they could come and sprinkle water in

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the house and drive out the devil and get a box of rye or a dozen eggs for it. Now not even children believed their dark tales about the Unclean One . . . a stalwart achievement, I thought, this of killing superstition in the village.

And what of the morality of our young people? I asked. Had there been any changes since the Revolution? None, they replied. Girls were as strict as ever their mothers and grandmothers had been. Of course a fellow could flirt with a girl, put his arm round her, kiss her, but only on the cheek or neck, never on the lips, not unless she was his fiancée; otherwise—well, our girls were quite strong; a blow of their fists might even draw blood, and besides the fellows knew better, respected the girls. Of course a boy and girl in love were together a good deal. The old practice of sweethearts sleeping in each other's arms at *nochleg* still prevailed; but lapses in conduct were as rare as in old times, which was natural enough, for it is the worst of all things for a girl to submit to a man. Her betrayer even if he be her lover is likely to abandon her, and no other man except perhaps one old enough to be her grandfather would have her as a wife. Only a few years ago a girl in the neighboring village had a child, and so afraid was she of being found out that she choked it with her hands and buried it back of the house. . . .

And did young people marry as young as ever? Aye, they did, only there were too many girls nowadays, and the fellows had grown independent, demanded substantial dowries, a horse and wagon, two hundred poods of rye, or gold rubles, a hundred, two hundred, and if a girl had no dowry to offer she was more than likely to become the spouse of a widower with a large family or remain an old maid. Dowries were vicious, a remnant of *bourzhui* savagery, and something would have to be done to kill the custom. It was unfair to the poor girl. And what of the *Komsomoltsui* (young Communists)? I asked. Was it true that they were a bit lax in their morality? *Ekh*, the *Komsomoltsui!* There were only two in our village, and there were no more in any of the villages around, and some of them should retire to a monastery. They were worse than any monks ever dreamed of being. They were against kissing and even against dancing, said all that was the invention of the bourgeoisie to corrupt the peasant and proletarian.

§ 2

We had now left the confines of the village and were on the open road. The other boys and girls caught up with us. They were singing in a chorus an old folk-tune of a lover, a consumptive, soon to die and bidding his sweetheart farewell. My companions joined in the song, and I rode along silent, gazing at the moonlit fields ahead, memories of old days trooping upon my mind, an immense emotion rising in my heart. At last we reached the pasture and dismounted from our horses, each of us untying the little rope that hung over the horse's neck and fettering his forefeet, so that he would not stray away very far. Some of the boys and girls strolled off singing to the river to play games, and the rest of us squatted down on the grassy ground now heavy with fresh dew. There was no bonfire—no more woods near and no need

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for it, the boys explained, no more wolves to frighten away. . . .

One of our party was a youth from a neighboring village named Pavel, who had come over to have a chat with me. He was light-haired, with twitching eyes and a morose face. He had been in America several years, where he worked in a dye factory, an atrocious job, he said, chemicals just eating him up inside. When the Revolution came he eagerly returned home. He had with him five hundred dollars, and as no one was allowed to have foreign money in Russia at that time, his was taken away from him. But that was nothing—fie upon money! He thought he'd come home, get land, settle down, marry, and live in comfort. He did get land—the estate of the landlord in his village was divided—but to his share fell only two *dessiatines* (about five acres), and how could he live on that? What a fool he'd been to have come back to the old village! *Ekh*, there in America he had nice clothes, shoes, shirts, collars, ties; evenings he had to himself, could do what he pleased; and here—in *lapti* again, in sheepskins, living with pigs and chickens and eternally toiling, and all for what?

"And is it right to compare America to Russia?" asked Vassil, a slightly built youth with a soft appealing voice. He had served in the Red army and though not a Communist was a firm believer in the Soviets. He was not over twenty, perhaps the best-read youth in the village and the best orator.

"America never had a czar like Russia," he added.

"Nor priests like ours," broke in Antosh, one of the two *Komsomoltsui* in the community. He was a stocky lad of about seventeen with a wad of frizzled hair sticking out from under his cap and hanging umbrella-like over his forehead.

"Perhaps it is not fair to make comparisons," replied Pavel, "but I have lived in America and I cannot help thinking of how different things are there." And leaning close to Vassil so that their heads almost touched, he continued: "People live there—do you understand? They live, they do things, useful things, improve themselves all the time, their homes, their machinery, everything. And here—*ekh*—unfortunate Russia!" He sighed and motioned with his hand.

Antosh was furious. Communism and the Soviets were a religion to him, and he never could bear criticism of either.

"You talk like my grandfather," he protested, "who cannot read and write, has never seen a railroad, lies on the oven all the time, summer and winter, and yells that Russia is perishing."

"And are you so sure he is wrong?" Pavel interjected.

"As if a young man who is sane could ask such a question!" Antosh replied angrily.

"Well," said Pavel bitingly, "I have been back in Russia three years now, and—who knows?—perhaps I have lost my mind." Then drawing close to Antosh, looking fixedly into his eyes, and shaking his fist as though to emphasize his words, he resumed in a loud voice that throbbed as much with anger as with regret: "Damn it, take our tax system; is not that the most insane thing on earth? A man knows not how many taxes he is to pay, nor when, nor how much. To-day the agent comes and collects a land-tax, in

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a week he comes again and demands a poll-tax, then he reappears and wants a cattle-tax, and he keeps on coming all the time. It got so that every time a muzhik went outdoors he expected to meet a tax-collector. No wonder that in some places peasants killed the tax-agent."

"By Jove," came a voice from the outer edge of the crowd, "that tax was a bear. I am for the Soviets, have been in the Red army, and would go again against the damned Poles or the counter-revolutionaries, but there is no gainsaying the fact that our tax system was a terrible blunder."

"Terrible indeed!" other boys chimed in.

"But it is abolished now," shouted the *Komsomoletz*.

"Yes," said Pavel, "but think of the blood it has drawn from us!"

"And the new tax," continued Antosh feverishly, "favors the poor man. A peasant with only one horse and two *dessiatines* and a wife and children hardly pays anything."

"As if he could pay anything!"

"But if the czar was in power, they'd pull the boots off his feet."

"And now he has no boots; they'd have to pull the skin off his flesh."

§ 3

Antosh sighed aloud in disgust, Vassil smiled, and Pavel calmly rolled a cigarette in a piece of newspaper. A group of girls who had been sitting by themselves under a stubby stunted cedar, munching pears and chattering quietly, now joined our circle, put their arms round each other, and listened to the discussion.

"You are too embittered, Pavel," said Vassil.

"I am, ha? Take the case of the blacksmith in your own village. Is not it a scandal the way he has been treated? True, he is no expert mechanic. But a bolt he could make and a plow he could sharpen too. He was of some use to the people here. And now? Now his shop is closed, falling to ruins, bellows, hammers, anvil rusting and rotting, and if the people here have a small job to do they have to travel for miles and waste hours to get it done. And why? Because the tax they slammed upon your blacksmith he could not stand and, now they are trying to do the same thing to the blacksmith in our village. Only yesterday he refused to fix my plow; he said he was closing up his place. Now what sort of a system is that?" He was excited, and as he talked he sprayed our faces with drops of spit.

The *Komsomoletz* was on the point of saying something, but Pavel shut him off with a violent gesture and continued:

"Or take the case of Yefim in the village of C——. And remember he is president of the local soviet too and an understanding muzhik. Forty poods of rye they slammed upon him for his windmill, which has not been working for nearly a year, as he has not been able to buy the timber with which to repair it. He begged the volost soviet to release him from the tax, or to make it not more than ten poods, for he has been drawing no income from the mill; and what is more, the village signed a petition stating that the mill was out of order and begging the soviet to reduce the tax to a reasonable amount. But the volost paid no attention, and do you know what Yefim has done?"

"What?" asked several voices in unison.

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"He's taken down his mill!"

"Indeed?"

"What else could he do? What would you have done in his place? What would Lenin himself have done? Now Nikifor, the president of your soviet, was telling the people this afternoon that the reason everything is so high-priced is because there has been so much destruction during the war. Is that any reason why this destruction should continue now, when there is no more war; and what is it but destruction when a man has to take down a windmill, which the community needs?"

The *Komsomoletz* rose upon his knees and violently waved his hands.

"No one denies," he shouted, "that many of our officials are numskulls and scoundrels. Lenin himself has written much about it, and the party is working hard to clean them out."

"They ought to be clapped into jail or sent to Siberia," came a voice from the crowd.

"To jail, you say?" repeated the *Komsomoletz*. "They are being shot."

Pavel resumed his tirade, his voice no less impassioned than before.

"And think of the way," he said, "they have arranged the renting of meadows to us. Ha, ha, ha! It makes me laugh. In former times a muzhik paid the landlord seven or eight rubles for a plot of swamp-land, and he cut the hay on it, and if there was wood he cut that too. Now the wood he must not touch, and the same plot of swamp costs thirty-two poods of rye. In money it is not more than seven or eight gold rubles; for rye, like everything else the peasant raises, is as cheap as sod. But think of the sweat and blood it takes to get that much rye out of the ground. And then the landlord always had a competent man keep the swamp in good condition, hold the ditches open, put new seed around where the grass had thinned; and now?"

"The swamp is neglected," admitted Vassil, "but are you not expecting too much at once, Pavel? It is not more than two-three years since we drove the Poles out of here."

"Keep ditches open; is that too much?"

"The new manager proved worthless," explained the *Komsomoletz*, "and he'll soon be fired."

"And look at the way they are selling wood to us," Pavel breezed on heedless of the efforts of the *Komsomoletz* to explain away his charges. "Formerly a man paid five gold kopecks a load, and now he has to pay eighteen; and formerly he could go for wood whenever he pleased, and now this summer they won't sell a stick, and in winter only on certain days, and not to an individual but to an *artel* [group]. We must all form *artels*. But supposing my horse is sick at the time my partners are ready to go? Then what? Then I must remain without wood, freeze to death, ha? No wonder peasants are turning thieves and stealing wood nights."

"That too is being looked into," the *Komsomoletz* once more explained.

"And meanwhile we are being bled," Pavel interrupted him; "bled, I say. Do you understand? And think of the time one must waste to get any official matter transacted. It took me two weeks to obtain permission to come from Leningrad home. Two weeks of standing in line and chasing from one place to another to see one damned fool after another. It took my uncle two months to get permission to cut

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wood for a new house, and only a few weeks ago my brother spent three days just to get a newly born child registered; and then the papers you must sign and the baskets of stamps you must buy and paste on these papers! The devil knows what they are thinking of."

"The government must live," remonstrated Vassil mildly. "We are terribly poor, Pavel. Everybody has robbed us, the Poles, the czarist generals, the infernal Czecho-Slovaks who stole all our gold in Kazan; and our officials work hard, and must live; bread and potatoes at least they must have, and the government must get funds somewhere."

"And how important they feel, these new bureaucrats!" Pavel raced on vehemently. "You say nothing about that, none of you. In America if you want to see the governor of a State you just go to his office, make an appointment. You may be a proletarian, a peasant, a horse-thief; he'll see you at the time he agrees; and here they've got such airs about them. A former herder of pigs or an apple-thief who can barely scribble his name sits at a desk, scolds, growls, shuts you off with a threat if you say a word of protest against his infernal delays."

"Can you blame our Soviet workers for getting out of patience with our muzhik?" demanded the *Komsomoletz*. "Go to the volost and see how they act, how they crowd close to a man's desk, breathe into one's very mouth, shout, interrupt each other, call one another vile names, swear, lie, offer bribes."

Pavel broke into a loud laugh.

"Is it not so?"

Pavel laughed again and stretched out on the grass flat on his back.

"Of course it is," he admitted calmly. "It is worse than you picture it. I know our muzhik. That's why I say it's all hopeless."

"Our greatest curse is that our people are so infernally ignorant," lamented Vassil.

"And cruel," added the *Komsomoletz*.

"Did you hear what happened in the village of S—— last week?" inquired one of the boys who lay near Pavel, resting his chin in his hand.

"You mean the robbery?" asked Vassil.

"Yes, of the man who recently returned from America. They stole three hundred dollars from him, all his clothes, and nearly choked him to death with a sack. And do you know who did it?"

"Who?"

"My father came back from there this afternoon, and he said it was neighbors, and the militia found it out and bundled them all off to jail, and there were two women in it."

"What brutes!"

"What beasts!"

"They ought to be whipped."

"Yes, and until the blood spurts out of their vile carcasses," shouted the *Komsomoletz*, clenching his fists.

"The rest of us are no better," broke in Pavel without rising from his position. "We are all foul, all of Russia; none of us are any good. That's why I say it is all hopeless."

Vassil chuckled.

"That's why we should all get together and improve ourselves," he declared good-naturedly.

"We are improving," the *Komsomoletz* added. "Our proletarian works only eight hours a day. If he is idle or ill, he need not starve; the

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government grants him an allowance. When his wife has a child she receives an allowance too, for special nourishment, so she can have good milk for the baby. And if she cannot feed the baby herself another nurse is provided for her; and a doctor looks after her all the time, takes her to the hospital if necessary; and all that costs the proletarian nothing. Even America with all her wonders, of which you never tire to speak, Pavel, has not done as much for the proletarian."

"And why talk only of the proletarian?" insisted Vassil. "We peasants have not been neglected."

"Indeed not," interrupted Antosh with enthusiasm. "You won't find a single muzhik in this country who has not land enough for bread and potatoes at least."

"And who ever saw a newspaper in this village in old times?" resumed Vassil. "And now the volost is sending one to us quite often, and pamphlets and books too, once in a while, and we have a chance to know what is going on in the outside world, where there are railroads and factories and machines. And think of the changes in the Red army; a miracle that is!"

"And what a miracle!" repeated the *Komsomoletz* with triumph.

"In former times what was a soldier?" Vassil continued. "A slave, a dog to be kicked and pounded by drunken officers. Before the war when one of our fellows went to the army his mother and sisters and aunts and neighbors cried themselves sick with sorrow, for he went off for a long time, often for seven years. And how was he treated in the army? It makes my blood boil whenever I hear my father tell of his experiences in the service. Do you know that if a soldier was in a railroad station and wanted to smoke a cigarette he first had to look round to see if an officer was there, and if there was, he had to go to him and ask him for permission to smoke?"

"What beasts!" blurted out a rough voice.

"Yes," went on Vassil, "and he had no right to wear a collar or rubbers. Why? Because officers wore these, and a soldier had no right to do anything that an officer was privileged to do, lest he come to think of himself in any way the equal of an officer. And he had no right to go to the theater except by special permission, and then could sit only in the gallery, where no officer could see him. And if he ever was on a street tram in the city he had to stand on the platform outside. Why? Because there might be an officer inside the car. A soldier always had to think of himself as the inferior of everybody. Everybody, do you understand? A thief, a drunkard, a murderer could ride inside a streetcar, sit anywhere he pleased in the theater, if he had the money for a high-priced ticket. But a soldier always the back door, always like a slave, a dog. That's what the soldier was in old times."

"*Ekh*, what devils!" the rough voice roared out again.

"What beasts!" added another.

"Thrice-cursed scoundrels," snapped out a third.

"But now," Vassil went on, "a soldier is a free man. No officer dare insult him, and let one touch a soldier with the hand, and out of the army he flees into jail for years. And there is no more standing at attention until your feet sink under you and your bones crack, and there is no more 'your Highness' and 'your Excellency.'

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It is all *tovarisch* now; the soldier is as high and excellent as Trotzky himself. Now when a peasant youth goes to the army, no one weeps, for he goes away only for a short time, and his family enjoys certain special privileges—don't pay as much taxes for one thing—and when he comes home he is a cultured man. He understands the class struggle, knows who Marx was, believes in the Revolution. He is against the priests. He knows that working-men and peasants are brothers and should not shoot each other."

"And what other things has the Revolution given the peasant?" I asked. "Our peasant in this village?"

"Well," replied Vassil, "you have heard our old people this afternoon. They yelled and argued and cursed and abused the Soviets, didn't they? And nobody stopped them. And in old times—ha, ha, ha! No muzhik dared whisper a word of opposition."

"And now," Antosh broke in, "a muzhik is given first preference in the university like the proletarian, and he pays nothing either, and if he is poor he gets his living free too."

"And he can be an officer in the army," Antosh added rapturously.

"A colonel and a general too, I suppose?" I asked.

"We have no more colonels and no more generals," Antosh hastened to enlighten me. "These titles were all bourgeois truck, and we have done away with that. Now it is all commander, of a regiment, or of a division, and a peasant can climb as high as his ability allows."

"The Soviets have done well by us," the youth with the rough voice remarked.

"Indeed they have," several others added.

"Only we lack one thing, technique," said the *Komsomoletz* sadly.

"*Ekh*, if we only had your American technique!"

"We need that surely enough," Vassil agreed. "Then we could have tractors and electricity and threshing-machines."

"And automobiles," Antosh added.

"That will come though in time."

"Indeed it will," some one in the crowd spoke up. "If we could drive the Poles out of here and smash the armies of all the counter-revolutionary generals and drive the foreign invaders to their own shores, we can develop technique too."

"We must develop it."

"It is our only hope."

"Yes, our only salvation."

§ 4

Hardly had the words of the last speaker died out when a loud laugh broke upon our ears. It was Pavel. We all turned our eyes on him and waited in silence for an explanation of this sudden outburst of mirth—or was it bitterness?

"Tractors, electricity, automobiles!" he repeated ironically and once more roared with laughter.

"And why do you laugh?" asked Antosh indignantly.

"And why should I not? *Ekh*, you silly children!"

"He laughs; he thinks it is funny," resented the *Komsomoletz*.

"Universities you talk about," said Pavel derisively. "You had better teach the muzhik to read and write."

"We are teaching him," Antosh shouted. "Look at our Red army, the hundreds of thousands of illiterates who have learned to read and write while in the service."

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"All I know," Pavel retorted, "is that in your village there are only three girls who can read and write—or is it four?"

"Whose fault is that?"

"Whosesoever the fault, the fact is a fact."

"Our lazy idiotic parents would not move the magnificent home of the former landlord at K——, which the soviets have given us for a school-house."

"We young people will have to do it ourselves," said Vassil, "if our fathers will let us."

One of the little fellows remarked: "My father swore he won't make a move to help bring the building. He said if the soviets want to have a school in the village let them move it over."

"We'll do it without asking them," the *Komsomoletz* shouted hotly.

"Supposing they refuse to let us take the horses and wagons?" asked the little fellow.

"They cannot stop us though," Vassil assured him.

"We'll have a school-house soon," the *Komsomoletz* went on in a burst of enthusiasm. "It is a big building. We'll have room not only for classes but for theatricals, entertainments, lectures. All of our boys and girls shall learn to read and write and shall spend their idle hours not in silly games and dances but in discussions, in learning the truth about things, so that they shall become enlightened citizens. It's our poverty, our backward technique, that's keeping us back."

"Why does not the American proletarian help us with technique?" One of the boys turned in my direction.

"The American proletarian is not friendly to the Soviets," I explained.

"The American capitalists have seduced him," said the *Komsomoletz*. "They have filled his mind with lies. But—*nichevo*—we'll have our own technique."

"Never," burst out Pavel again.

"You don't think we'll ever develop it?" Antosh's voice throbbed with wrath.

"Never!" retorted Pavel with a finality that seemed brazen and portentous.

"Never?"

"Never!"

"And I say we shall," insisted Antosh, slapping his hands together.

"Of course we shall," Vassil good-naturedly assured Pavel. "It will come, this much needed technique, as surely as snow in winter."

"You mean in summer," Pavel shot back.

Antosh and Vassil laughed and shook their heads in despair of ever breaking Pavel's stubborn pessimism.

"And why are you so sure of it?" asked one of the girls, turning to Pavel. It was the first time a girl had spoken during the entire evening.

Pavel rose to a half-sitting posture, put down the big sheepskin collar round his neck, and turning toward the girl, said:

"Because, *milaya* [my dear], we are a rotten people, the rottenest in the world. You who have not been outside of this village or even outside of Russia cannot perhaps realize it. But I have been about the world a bit. America is no angel; she kills, and cruelly too. But she builds, and oh, how wonderfully! But we Russians, we can only kill, and more savagely than any people on earth. We are a lazy, dishonest, beastly people, and there is only one salvation for our

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unfortunate land, only one; and that is for a flood to come upon it and drown out every living thing; for everything that crawls or walks or flies over Russia is tainted, foul, capable only of spreading its terrible infection and must therefore be destroyed, everything and everybody. And then when there are no more living things left here, let the Americans come along with their technique, their honesty, their energy, their genius, and repopulate this land, and build new villages, new cities, new railroads, new factories. Then there will be a new Russia, a healthy, happy Russia, and until then, *ekh!*" He sighed, motioned with his head, and dropped flat upon the ground again.

The *Komsomoletz* laughed, a laugh not of joy or amusement but of wrath and disgust; and Vassil, always good-natured, always calm, looked at Pavel, smiled, shook his fine round head several times, and exclaimed amid puffs of his cigarette, "Yes, yes," and smiled again. Only the girls seemed disturbed and saddened by Pavel's terrible words. They stared at him in silence as at a doomed man.

"Take him back to America," Vassil turned to me.

"A lost soul," sighed the *Komsomoletz*. "He will not see light."

Suburban Dawn

By Henry Morton Robinson

Nothing is paler than suburban dawn;
Nothing in mountain forests have I seen
More shyly tranquil than the dappled fawn
Of daybreak crossing squares of dusty green.
Dawn is a white doe pasturing between
The hedge and house, the sidewalk and the lawn,
Cropping the berried bush of darkness clean
While all the curtains in the town are drawn.

Over the pavement lean the dreaming trees
With lashes of their drowsy leaves turned down;
Brown ivy-sparrows tune their morning glees;
The day is trying on her newest gown—
And dons it quickly, hearing on the breeze
The whistle of the first train into town.

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